I:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE5 Bellacoola NE5

light on obscure points. That is a task for the comparative student and nothing but confusion would result from such an incorporation in this volume. For the benefit of the reader, footnotes have been inserted referring to *The Mythology of the Bella Coola Indians*[1] by Boas, the most comprehensive description of the tribe. In the field I deliberately disregarded published accounts.

And what of these people, the subject of this book?

The intimate experiences of the second winter in Bella Coola only confirmed my feeling of sadness at the decay of the old arts and crafts. Music, painting, carving, weaving, story-telling, acting, all are passing away. Only a handful of the tribe survives, and of them the younger people ape the white [illegible] in the love and customs of their fathers. I know of few sadder experiences than talking with some Bella Coola patriarch and realizing the tragedy which he feels at the termination of his people's culture.

Though the individual may suffer, civilization must press onward and the life of the Indian will soon disappear. With it will pass forever manners, customs, beliefs, rites, and knowledge, data of value to students of man both now and in the future. Every year lessens the amount of information available. In Bella Coola, for example, the death of Captain Schooner left a gap which none could fill. Others must follow him, and within a short time there will be no ethnological work possible in that tribe. A tithe of the people may survive, but their culture, the growth of generations, will have been swept away.

Most of those to whom I am indebted for help in this study have passed away. Dr. A. C. Haddon and Dr. W. H. R. Rivers, both of Cambridge University, who were my mentors in anthropology, are dead; so too is Dr. E. Sapir, former Chief of the Anthropological Division in the National Museum, who gave me instruction in phonetics, and Mr. H. I. Smith, Dominion Archaeologist, to whom are owing most of the photographs re-

[1] Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. II, 1898.

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
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kenzie, making his memorable overland trip to the Pacific, records coming upon Indian villages at every few miles of his course. Boas describes the way in which the inhabitants of each of these claim to be descended from one group of ancestors.

Though it is impossible to estimate the former population of the Bella Coola valley with any degree of accuracy, it must have been in the thousands. In 1922 there were surviving rather more than three hundred individuals, who live in one village on an Indian reserve near the north bank of the Bella Coola River, about a quarter of a mile from the sea. In the last century the tribe was stricken with smallpox, and since then consumption, venereal disease, measles, and other diseases of the white man have taken their deadly toll. Changed conditions of life and decay of the rich ceremonial around which centred their interests in the old days are also contributory factors in their decline. Within the last few years, however, the population has begun to increase.

Bella Coola Villages

The following list of Bella Coola villages was obtained. In an effort to learn which had been deserted in recent years, the writer always asked whether or not a town was occupied at the time of Mackenzie's visit, an event of such great interest to the grandparents of the older people that the memory of it is still preserved. Villages said to have been occupied at that time are marked with an asterisk.

Three rivers empty into the head of South Bentinck Arm, which is about one mile in width (see Plate 7). The Bella Coola, flowing from the east, enters at the southern edge, and the *Nalqatskuaxa* winds in from the north to the opposite angle of the head of the fiord. This stream, "The Nearest River" of the Bella Coola, so-called because of its proximity to the sea, is shown on maps as the Necleetaconnay. Between the mouths of these two is the *Pe-oib*, a small stream rising

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
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761 whenever the skin is broken. Any wound may prove dan-
[752] gerous, but particularly one that cuts either of the invisible
[827] lines along which vitality flows from the little finger to the little toe. An injury to one of these channels spreads rapidly and is in many cases fatal.

761 It is generally considered that a person dies if his life leaves
774 his body. In contradiction to this, though the discrepancy seems of slight importance to the Bella Coola, is the belief that it ascends at the winter solstice to the gathering of the supernatural beings in *Nusmā'a* to greet *Alquntăm*. It is common knowledge that some part of the human body does this, but there is diversity of opinion regarding which it may be. Some say it is the spirit, but the consensus of opinion is that it is the life. If it is successful and receives presents in the land above, its owner will prosper on earth; if it is unfortunate, he will be the same; if it falls in the crush as the guests hurry forth to escape the heat of *Alquntăm*'s entry, he will die. By dreams
761 a man learns the fortune of his supernatural representative,
787 and from them he can judge what is in store for him during the coming year and receive intimations concerning birth and death, secret society matters and, in fact, every phase of human activity, since all are decided at the meeting of *Alquntăm* and his associates. Dreams are considered to be especially important at this season of the year (I, p. 608) and information obtained from them may, perhaps, be the origin of the present firm conviction that some portion of the body actually ascends.
[182] Bella Coola beliefs have so broken down in recent years that lack of unanimity concerning the specific part is not surprising, nor does it alter the importance of this conviction. No attempt is made to explain how an individual can remain alive during the annual absence of his life.

761 Although the life is so ethereal, it really consists of four intangible elements which unite to form the immaterial whole. One of these parts, including the voice, is located in the throat, another in the trunk, a third in the legs, and a fourth in the feet; the body is thus divided into four quarters. The con-

b:McDermith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
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CHAPTER III

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Ancestral Family—The Village Community—The Family—Kinship Terms—Names

As in other communities, the social, religious, and economic aspects of Bella Coola life are interdependent, but there is an added complexity in the influence of mythological concepts. This not only complicates investigation in the field, but it also renders a logical description of their customs difficult. Some reference to practices recorded in detail in later chapters is unavoidable.

In many communities, ethnologists have been able to begin with the social organization of the people. Among the Bella Coola, this is impossible, since their religious beliefs colour every aspect of their life, and these must be understood by anyone who wishes to comprehend their culture as a whole. In this chapter, too, it is necessary to commence with a description of that aspect of mythology which serves as the cohesive bond to one of the social units, the ancestral family.

Ancestral Family

As recorded in the last chapter, it is believed that in the beginning of time *Alquntám* caused the first man and woman to be created in his house above and sent them down to populate the earth. They came in groups of two, three, four, or more, brothers and sisters, or more rarely men and wife, to different parts of the Bella Coola valley. They brought with them tools, houses, clothing, even sustenance in the shape of fish and animals. More important, from the point of view of social organization, they brought with them names and ceremonial prerogatives. In fact, the Bella Coola believe that their culture was created by *Alquntám* in the distant past, and has not been the result of slow growth. It is true that there

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The recent decay of Bella Coola culture may have destroyed traces of more definite obligations with respect to the ancestral family, but all the evidence indicates that it has always been a fluid unit. Its very lack of functions makes it difficult to discuss, and the above account was pieced together from scraps of information collected from many different people at various times; yet, intangible though it be, it is a very real unit to the Bella Coola and pervades their life. Each individual knows those to whom he is related. In many cases the exact kinship is lost, but it is remembered that a man from such-and-such a village married a woman from another village, and it is proved from the use by their descendants of names from the same origin myth. The concept of physical strength imparted by a closely akin ancestry is always present and gives a person the real "power" in the village founded by those first ancestors of his. For the ancestral family is usually thought of in terms of villages. A man belongs to the village where his first ancestor came to earth, though he is equally a member of other towns into which his ancestors may have married. A man without ancestry, without *nu'ulem*, is a miserable creature; he has no home in this world, or, theoretically, in the world to come. The ancestral family is a unit essentially held together by the ties of sentiment and pride of ancestry.

In addition to the above social elements of the ancestral family, it is felt that all its members have certain tendencies. If one of the first ancestors had a certain physical peculiarity, or met with a particular kind of fortune, either good or bad, his descendants are more likely to experience the same than any other people. These tendencies may skip many generations, and may be inherited either through the mother or the father. In fact, Bella Coola belief on this point closely agrees with modern knowledge of heredity; the term for such an inheritable tendency is *nalhalim* or *nalhemaqlut*. Such characteristics are:

(1) Proficiency in using tools;
(2) Ability as a hunter;

1:16:Howells E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NEh Bellacoola NEh

451 child of a mixed Bella Coola and slave marriage. As long as
527 such an one maintained a position of importance in the com-
578 munity by the distribution of presents, nothing was said, but
if he should fail to do so, he could be, and frequently was,
[554] insulted by having references made to his ancestry. In case
of dispute or rivalry it was always a temptation to refer to
such a blot, but if he had stood for it with presents, references
were considered improper. Unquestionably, memory of slave
527a ancestry was forgotten in course of time if the line was influ-
527 ential, although recollections of the stigma were always car-
ried for at least two or three generations. At the present time
the most influential woman in Bella Coola, the one who has
given most presents, is the granddaughter of a Smith Inlet
slave. This man had lived in Bella Coola for many years and
had married another slave, by whom he had a son. The latter
became the husband of an influential Alaxe woman. When she
became pregnant, her family secured the liberation of her
husband, and gave many presents to "wash the child." One
daughter was born to this couple, the woman just mentioned.
Her mother's relatives were influential, and her father was
[555] such an expert canoe-maker that he was able to win an honour-
able position for his daughter by presents of his handiwork.
The woman, possessed of considerable ability herself, has been
able to give many ceremonies and so reach a position of emi-
nence. No one dares insult her by mentioning her ancestry,
but everyone knows about it and if her children should fail to
hold their position, they would be open to insult on this score.
The woman has validated names and myths derived both from
her mother and father, without explaining how the Smith Inlet
traditions came to Bella Coola.

To sum up, it may be said that the position of slaves in Bella Coola was not particularly onerous, though it depended entirely on the will of their masters. Without status in the
• [182] community, a slave could have been abused by a cruel owner, though the public life of the village, where all lived and ate together, tended to break down the unpronouncedly enforced differences of rank.

1:McDougall E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NEA Bellacoola NEA

(a) The strengthening of the donor's seat.

(c) The strengthening, or initial establishment, of seats for a number of young relatives of the donor who may, or may not, be those who are being initiated into the *nusmē* society. Other youths may also be established on seats by their relatives.

The duration of a potlatch varies with the number of rites being performed. The preliminaries, including the beginning of seclusion for *nusmē* initiates, requires at least several weeks, in some cases months. There is further delay of a week or more after the arrival of the first guests, as only when the last party has arrived can the actual potlatch begin. This can then be completed in three days and nights, although if many initiates are performing their *nusmē* dances, a longer time is required.

What are the consequences of giving a potlatch?

In the first place the donor spreads the fame of his name far and wide, also the myth with which it is incorporated. Thus he increases the renown of his ancestors, a source of intense pride and gratification.

More important even than this, it elevates the donor himself. With the proper carrying out of the complicated ritual and the knowledge that his name is now known among different tribes, a man experiences a feeling of mental superiority which enables him to take a leading part in the affairs of his community. In Bella Coola a chief (*sukhaq*) is a person whose influence is paramount owing to his success in giving potlatches.[1] If several chiefs in one village have given potlatches, he who has given most is generally of greatest importance, although often a man of forceful character who has held, for example, five potlatches will be regarded with greater respect than one of lesser weight, even if he has given six. The whole system is exceedingly fluid, as might be expected where chiefs ultimately depends on individual prowess. In theory, the man who holds the name of the first person to occupy a village, as

[1] Particularly if he has given four potlatches and can accordingly be described as a *nusmē sūkhaq* (q. v.). In *nusmē* songs the ordinary word *sūkhaq* is also sometimes employed for "chief."

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

After bestowal of these presents, the *siki* of the penultimate group of guests shakes his rattle, and exactly the same procedure is carried out by members of his party. They, too, give presents to X and the other Bella Coola chiefs. The same rites are carried out by each party of guests in the reverse order of their arrival. It is frequently near dawn before the first-comers have completed their dances and distribution of gifts. X then gives another meal to all, with no restriction on the choice of food. This concludes the night's ceremony, and the guests depart, except those who are staying in X's house.

556 *

THE POTLATCH: FIRST DAY

Considering the lengthy ceremonials of the preceding evening, it is not surprising that on this day no one stirs early. The guests receive their breakfast in the houses where they are accommodated, and meanwhile a number of young men gather in X's house to assist in the preparation of food for the main meal of the day. During the previous night a large amount of smoked mountain goat has been put in water to soak. This is now placed in a number of food-boxes, ready for distribution, water is added and hot stones lifted in to bring it to a boil. When the water comes to the boil, mountain goat grease is added, and then bearberries; it is usually about two o'clock in the afternoon before the meal is ready. The guests are summoned and the food given them, the chiefs, as usual, receiving more than those of lower rank. After eating they disperse to await the evening rites.

[251] [252] [554]

It was impossible to obtain an accurate account of the ritual carried out on the evening of this, the first day of the potlatch proper. The ceremonial was of less importance than those preceding and following, and it has long fallen into disuse. The guests take up their accustomed places, and the Bella Coola members of the *nusel* range themselves near them and behind the fire. The corners next the door are occupied by non-members of the society. The singers beat out two of

[182] •

556 * 575 [535]

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
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use his own discretion as to the design. At the top he always places the bird or animal cloak in which his first ancestor, traced patrilineally, came to this earth. Beneath this is the cloak of his mother's first ancestor if it differs from his father's. There are no fixed rules for other representations. Sometimes a man wishes to display the cloaks of the first ancestors of his wife, or wives; more often, the designs are of creatures with which his own ancestors came in contact after reaching this earth.[4] One of the first settlers, *Smaoan* (I, p. 332), married a Bella Bella woman from whom he obtained a ceremony connected with a whale, an animal which has often been used on the totem-poles of his descendants. The lower figures on totem-poles often represent creatures from which a recent ancestor of the chief obtained supernatural assistance. Consequently, the number of designs which may be used is legion, and the order of portrayal is immaterial. Moreover, Bella Coola art is not sufficiently realistic for designs to be easily recognized, nor is there standard conventionalization of little used animals; so it follows that the designs on totem-poles are often unidentifiable.[5] This is of little consequence, since their value rests neither upon the artistic skill exhibited, nor even upon their significance in connection with the owner's ancestral myth, but upon the goods expended to validate the display.

All Bella Coola totem-poles are carved from the trunks of huge cedars, with the wood cut away so that the designs stand out in high relief. The carvers are allowed great latitude both in choice of form and colouring, hence there is wide variation

[4] *Nuxnamaioi* is the term applied to animals with which ancestors came in contact, other than their cloaks.

[5] This statement represents the layman's point of view, that is, of the Bella Coola who was not himself a carpenter-sculptor. It is probable that an expert would have greater facility in recognizing the conventionalized forms used by his associates, although the whole pattern of Bella Coola culture was opposed to extreme standardization. Unfortunately, wood-carving, in fact art work of every kind, had degenerated to such an extent that only one man with any recognized skill in that respect was still living when this study was made. He was both unreliable and uncooperative, so that it was impossible even to collect examples of his work, still less to record his interpretations of the designs of masks or other objects carved by his predecessors.

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

225 small ocean-going canoe, with an assistant who passed his paddle through the water in such a way that a slight phosphorescent streak resulted. This resembled the course of a salmon. In a short time a seal would rise in pursuit of the "fish," and the watchful hunter would harpoon it. The seal would rush off with the head of the weapon, which was attached by a long line to the shaft remaining in the hunter's hand He would play it like a huge fish, until the exhausted animal was drawn to the side of the canoe and clubbed. Several seals were often obtained by this means in the course of a single night.

224 424 The two usual methods of killing mountain goats are by cornering them with dogs and then choking them to death, or by shooting with rifle or bow. There was formerly a special method of snaring which had been handed down as a prerogative from the time of the first people. The hunter used to set his snares on a precipitous path commonly used by goats and had remarkable success. Others might know how to make snares and where the hunter set them, but no one would ever attempt this method of hunting without the proper prerogative. Another right, enjoyed by another hunter, was the catching of bears in a similar way in nooses.

424 556 182 Little need be said in conclusion about these particular privileges, except to emphasize that they are merely an aspect of the principle of validated prerogatives which permeates every phase of Bella Coola life. It is as natural for a man to be made a singer or a hunter by the distribution of presents as it is for him to acquire a dance by the same means. Each is contained in an ancestral myth, and the validation of the prerogative enables the incumbent either to function actively, or at least to enjoy the social prestige attached to the craftsman who has been duly confirmed in his vocation. The necessity of bestowing gifts to validate a prerogative introduces an economic element to the concept, but this is lessened by the fact that a poor man can acquire a name by a relatively small

1: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

expenditure though he must forgo the prestige enjoyed by a man who has been able to elevate his professional names in a lavish manner. Selection is a constant factor in the social life of a Bella Coola; the man who uses all his wealth to acquire a firm seat cannot be "strong" in *nusk* matters; the man who desires to specialize in *kusiut* affairs cannot afford to display an elaborate totem-pole. Amid these conflicting desires, it often happens that a man somewhat neglects his professional prerogatives, especially those of which the dignity has been slightly lessened through superior skill shown by individuals endowed with no more than native ability. Upstarts of this kind have always infringed upon professional dignity, and the coming of the white man has added a new factor which has almost destroyed vocational prerogatives.

A'alk Dances

The most important, as well as the most spectacular, dances that occur at potlatches are those given by members of the *nusk* society. In addition to these, a feature of many potlatches is the performance of *a'alk* dances.[1] As already mentioned, from 1870 onwards there have been many changes in *nusk* ritual; new elements have been acquired by the marriages of Bella Coola to members of the coastal tribes, with the result that details of procedure vary at every ceremony according to the prerogatives of the donor. Since 1910, the influence of white civilization has increased to such an extent that *nusk* ceremonials have virtually been abandoned. This took place at a time when the ritual was in transition, a state of affairs which rendered difficult the collection of coherent information. *A'alk* dances are associated with *nusk*, but the addition of new features to the latter was accompanied by a decay of the former. Both societies have now almost ceased to exist, but whereas the *nusk* organization was abandoned during a period of change and accretion, that

[1] Called *t'alpus* in Kimsquit.

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

performance of rites of this kind. But sociological and ethical concepts, shown at their highest development in the potlatch, are not limited to a few weeks of the year, or to any class of the community. Generosity on a large scale can be publicly displayed by chiefs alone, but to a lesser degree this virtue must be practised by everyone, since avarice is considered a major sin. Anyone who happens to pass a house in which a meal is taking place must be invited to share it; to do otherwise would be considered rude. The person summoned must take at least a trifle to show that he is not churlish and too proud to eat with his host, while if he is hungry, he shares whatever is being served as a matter of course. The head of the family should be the first to taste any wine* as proof that it is not poisoned, but otherwise he fares little, if any, better than his guests. This custom is now rapidly falling into disuse through the construction of individual family houses with doors and locks. The fisherman who has exclusive rights to a suitable place for netting olachen or salmon must give some of his catch to anyone who asks him. If he has landed four salmon, the first solicitor is given one, later comers, none at all. When a net is set in the river, anyone passing is allowed to raise it and take some of the contents; if there are two fish, he may remove one, if many, three or four. To take all would be a despicable theft, sufficient to brand the transgressor as greedy; hence public opinion prevents the system from being carried to excess. A hunter who brings back several mountain goats or other large game is expected to invite his neighbours to a feast, which virtually means that he must share his takings.

Presents of this kind increase the prestige of the donor who has thus acted in accordance with Bella Coola ethics, and are advantageous investments since others must reciprocate. The system is carried to such lengths that, until recent years, it was more profitable to give away goods than to sell them. In the case of a sale, the purchaser endeavours to give as little as possible, whereas the recipient of a gift returns as much as

*This is a modern practice, dating from the introduction of home-brew.

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

ceremony. The child singers first beat out the song of the present donor, then that of his predecessor, to which the latter dances once again. If food is plentiful, *nuɬixkämɣ* ceremonies may be carried out every day for several weeks, or a year or two may elapse without one. A child's song is remembered from year to year and he dances whenever it is beaten out. The name acquired in this way is used semi-jocularly by a lad's comrades. After marriage, it is considered unfitting for a youth to be concerned with *nuɬäxkämɣ* and he normally becomes an *a'alt*.

Ceremonies of this kind have been discontinued for many years and it was impossible to obtain detailed accounts. The main features are clear: they served to instruct children in the methods of present-giving. According to one informant, there were two types of *nuɬäxkämɣ* ceremonial one of the humorous pattern above described in which, however, food alone was given away, and another in which miniature presents were distributed. This man believed that the latter was only possible for the children of wealthy chiefs, and that on such occasions the themes consisted of small incidents in the family myth. In either case, the importance of ceremonial can be judged from the manner in which it was impressed upon mere children.

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

585 covering" or "rope fastening" for her. Within a few days or weeks, they must invite their fellow-villagers to a ceremony of some kind. If it is winter this can be a *sisaok* dance, but in summer it must be a non-sacred affair. Y's father and other relatives attend, furnished with the usual gifts. When the ceremony is over and the time has come for the distribution of presents, a herald calls out that X has no seat. If he has already been established in one he calls out that it is not firm.[1] Y at once brings forward some of the goods provided by her relatives, and places these with the goods which X's family received at the wedding and are about to give away. The whole is then divided among the guests, together with presents provided by X for Y's relatives. The actual purpose of the rite may be to obtain names for some of X's young relatives or to establish seats for them: it is immaterial to Y's people to what end they are applied. Within recent years this [182] has sometimes taken place at a *kusiut* dance, but such overlapping between the two types of ceremonial is probably an innovation due to decay.

177 585 About 1910 an effort was made to introduce a marriage custom of the Kwakiutl. According to the Bella Coola, among them the wife gives to her husband's relatives one or more boards studded with teeth of the sea-otter. This makes teeth for the bride, so that if she ever quarrels with another woman she can draw back her lips and shame her rival by saying:

"What can you do? You have no teeth, while I have two sets," or as many boards as have been given at her marriage.

[563] The grandson of a Fort Rupert Kwakiutl, living in Bella Coola and considered a member of the tribe, owned one of these boards and used it at the marriage of his daughter in 1914. It was first given to the mother of the bridegroom, and repurchased with a copper; then given to the bridegroom, and redeemed; finally given, and again repurchased, from the father of the groom. The woman for whom this was done can

[1] The preferred time for this establishment is during a potlatch and the ritual connected with it has already been described (I, p. 167).

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

556 repurchase of your mother have become nothing beneath your
583 feet."

[558] When such an accident occurs, the relatives of X take some future occasion to give presents to validate his child, with the announcement:

"The goods used from the repurchase of his mother have become nothing beneath his feet. We hereby supply that deficiency."

Thus it is demonstrated that the relatives of both parents are interested in his welfare, so that his path is clear before him.

553 Many women are only repurchased once, but an effort is
556 made to do this frequently since the more times, the greater
583 her prestige. After several repurchasings it is felt that the names and other prerogatives "dragged across" by Y have become valueless. But since new names have been taken to her husband on each occasion, the marks of friendship between the two families are still plain. Then it is that those first transmitted can be revived by relatives of Y, unless, of course, X has validated them for his children. If there is only one repurchasing, the names remain the definite property of X. This is not a clearly formulated law, merely a sentiment that the earlier names have been covered by those later given, and that accordingly Y's relatives, having done what was proper, can now use the titles once more. There is a constant interchange of names and privileges between families related by marriage.

556 It is virtually impossible to over-estimate the importance
583 of this rite of repurchase among the Bella Coola, one of the
● [182] few customs preserved tenaciously amid the ruins of their ancient culture. The writer was forcibly struck with the following instance which occurred while he was in Bella Coola:

About fifteen years before, a young man and woman had married with due formality. After three children had been [586] born, the mother took to drink and vice until her husband at last repudiated her, retaining possession of the children. The woman, weakened by disease, divorced by her husband, and

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
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CHAPTER VIII

DEATH

Death Rites—Memorial Rites—Fate of the Dead

Death Rites

DEATH is marked by even more complicated and prolonged rites than marriage. Like so many primitive peoples, the Bella Coola not only carry out elaborate rituals soon after the actual decease, but hold lengthy commemorative and mourning ceremonials in later years. As these require the co-operation of a large number of people, the death of an individual affects a wider circle than his own relatives, and the celebrations have, therefore, an important social as well as religious significance.

Omens of Death

It is not surprising that the Bella Coola, believing in the omnipresence of the supernatural, should consider various peculiar occurrences to be omens of death. One of the simplest of these is to hear the falling of a tree when there is neither wind nor other reason to account for it. Such a fall is audible only to the person whom it warns of approaching death, either to himself or to one of his relatives. A number of men may be in the forest together, when one of them hears the crash of a tree and notices that his companions are unaware of it; he realizes that this is an omen and protects himself by calling out:

"Let this evil react against whoever has been plotting evil against me."

The basis of this custom is the belief that someone has been practising black magic against the hearer, who, by this answer, is able to cause the sorcery to recoil upon the malefactor. Even more dangerous than to hear a falling tree, is to have one crash

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

a man and assuage his sorrow to know that he has shown fitting respect to the dead, there is also a gain in social prestige. As the whole community respects, admires, and sometimes envies a man for having carried out a memorial potlatch, there is no doubt that he is pleased and gratified to such an extent that his grief is dulled. These two factors must constantly be kept in mind; memorial potlatches serve to commemorate the dead, but in so doing they add to the social importance of the donors. The two combine to bring considerable comfort to the chief who has lost a dear relative. In some cases the social prestige is the real motive, the grief assumed and unimportant; but in others the latter is the only factor that matters, and a chief is entirely oblivious to any increase in his own status. In most memorial potlatches, both feelings are present in the mind of the donor, and both are gratified.

DETAILED ACCOUNT OF A FUNERAL

In the preceding pages, an attempt has been made to describe the traditional death rites of the Bella Coola. The following section comprises a detailed account of funeral ceremonies witnessed in 1922. The contrast between these and the ones already recorded, will indicate some of the changes in custom which are of such importance in studies of cultural growth or decline. The following description will also serve to demonstrate a point repeatedly mentioned, the manner in which business transactions and arrangements of all kinds take place whenever the people have been called together.

On June 27, 1922, the death occurred in Bella Coola of Jessie, Mrs. Samuel King, daughter of Captain Schooner. The latter, now deceased, was one of the writer's most trusted friends, and as a result of this friendship it was possible not only to attend the actual rites, but to ascertain much of the feeling underlying them. This advantage had its drawbacks, since it was manifestly impossible to question either the father or the husband of the woman too closely. The details will be de-

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
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777 A visitation is not regarded as an inheritable right, but as a
* 787 tendency; for generations no member of a family may see one
[424] of these beasts, but the tradition is preserved, and when one is seen it is recalled that such have been observed by ancestors of the fortunate one. Instances have occurred in which a person has obtained good luck without the tradition of this being in his family, but they are rare. On the other hand, a man may lose the advantage of his possession, even if he owns [785] a portion of a *mätsqas* or a *sxiaitl*, through failure to observe ceremonial chastity.

776 Some of the Bella Coola believe that the *mätsqas* and the *sxiaitl* are the same animal, which can assume these two forms; others that the two are distinct supernatural creatures. In any case the powers and characteristics ascribed to them are the same. Most families have a tradition regarding the appear- [173] ance of the one or the other to their ancestors, and the infor- [184] mation to be derived from them is always about that particular creature. Hence the details here described are probably not all known to any one individual.

* 789 The different types of appearances, and the different types
811 of taboos called forth, should be noted. These are due to
●182 failure on the part of the Bella Coola to rationalize the sum total of their concepts. Each man recounts what he believes to have happened to one of his ancestors or friends, irrespective of whether or not the methods used may be in direct contradiction to those employed by someone else on another occasion. A man who has heard of the *mätsqas*, for example, from his father and mother, may describe contradictory means of dealing with the creature, and in each case may affirm that disaster would have followed if the method described had not been carried out. Such lack of co-ordination is typical of the Bella Coola.

779 According to an elderly Kimsquit man, the *mätsqas* was
* 789 brought down in the beginning of time by one of his own
[773] ancestors, Omqemkilkla. It is to this fact that he attributes his own near approach to one on two occasions. As it is fre-

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* 575 sticks, while everyone calls out, *hoip*. This is repeated four
* 796 times. The sticks continue to sound irregularly as the younger
[787] men pull the enclosure to pieces and throw it on the central fire. By these means the *kukusiut* have been freed from their contact with the supernatural and, perhaps even more important, the repositories have been "tied up," to use the native term, for another year. Those members of the society whose dances have taken place in the house now wash the black from their faces and all share a light meal. The marshals take this last opportunity of addressing their fellows, impressing on them the necessity of maintaining the secrecy of the rites during the summer season. Above all, they warn them to hide the whistles and other paraphernalia most carefully. This concludes the season's ceremony in the house in question; some of the *kukusiut* withdraw, others remain, and the uninitiated are free to enter and take up the old threads of family life, as it was before the coming of the first call.

If it is not too late at night the party may move to a second house and remove the taboo from it in the same way. More often this is done on the following night, when a second body of *kukusiut* are allowed to wash. Another house is visited on the next evening, and so on in succession till all the enclosures are burnt and the only visible mark of what has happened is the collar of dyed cedar-bark worn by each novice.

[424] There may be certain prerogatives connected with this finale which could not be learnt owing to its discontinuance for many years. In fact, one old woman claimed to have a definite right to sing at the destruction of the enclosures, but it was unfortunately impossible to investigate the matter.

Concluding Observations and History

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● 182
571 It is virtually impossible to overestimate the importance of the sociological aspects of the society. During the ceremonial season the whole fabric of social life is altered; families are divided, parents and children being separated in many

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cases though an infant in arms, though uninitiated, can be brought to dances by its mother; distinctions between rich and poor, slave and freeman, become of slight importance; all that really matters is whether a person is or is not a *kusiut*. Membership in the society seems to the uninitiated the most desirable thing in life, although their fears are always so strong that they never cease to dread actual admission. The feeling of class consciousness which exists in a somewhat mild form at other seasons of the year, gives place to a powerful sentiment of superiority on the part of members of the society over those who are not so fortunate. Even the respect normally shown to chiefs is submerged since they, too, are subject to the rule of the marshals.

Apart entirely from this attitude of superiority and inferiority, is the bond of fellowship engendered among members of the society by the rites. Whatever happens, the uninitiated *must* be deceived. Moreover, the psychological effect of gathering nightly in a body for a specific purpose is tremendous. Night after night they eat together; night after night they listen to the words of the marshals, who impress on them the need for co-operation and secrecy, who hold before them the good example set by their fellows who have carried out rites successfully, who emphasize the fact that they are doing as their fathers did. The ceremonial import is of greatest consequence at all these gatherings, but when the uninitiated have withdrawn the *kukusiut* relax somewhat and enjoy themselves. The food itself is always of the best and some of the usual restrictions are removed. It is, for example, the only time that women are allowed to eat the flesh of seals. If this delicacy is provided the marshals enjoy the tidbits, but after Cannibals, novices, and others have received preferential treatment, the remainder is distributed to all and sundry.

It has been stated by some writers, especially those unfamiliar with the significance of native ceremonial life, that the dances of the coastal tribes are orgies of immorality. This point was investigated with care and it may be stated posi-

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177 fathers. Inherited beliefs are too deep-rooted to pass away
771 entirely within a few generations. Even those who claim to
[181] have adopted the new faith remain convinced of the potency of magic, and of the existence of those supernatural creatures which do not actively conflict with the white man's creed. Such lack of consistency is a world-wide trait, particularly intelligible among the Bella Coola whose philosophy abounds in contradictions, dependent upon statements handed down in the origin myths of different families.

626 The Bella Coola are constrained not only by the omni-
[181] presence of supernatural beings; they are constantly subjected to the influence of their fellows. They are far less individualistic than white people. A chief may boast that he can do as
[622] he pleases, that he can disregard the restrictions of lesser men; he often does so, but only because public opinion recognizes that he has reached a position of eminence by giving many potlatches. The duly validated warrior is brave because he
[703] feels that everyone is aware of his valour. The man who per-
[769] forms some ceremony in accordance with an ancestral myth incorporates himself with his forbears, and is strengthened by the conviction that he has gained their support and approbation. In every phase of life, a person is profoundly affected
177 by the approval or disapproval of his neighbours. At present
626 the construction of small houses, each occupied by a single
942 family, makes it possible for a man to hide himself, or to do work unknown to the rest of the community. This lessens the force of public opinion, although it is even now more potent than conscience in checking anti-social acts. Formerly, in communal houses, every action was fully known, making individual freedom of thought and act virtually impossible. A man
[602] is chiefly influenced by his relatives who take a great share in what the white man would consider purely family affairs. The effect of the group upon the individual must not be overlooked, nor can it be over-stressed in a study of these people.

177 The education and conversion of the younger men have
626 enormously lessened their reliance upon their fellows. In former
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times, older relatives were revered, not only as senior members of the ancestral family, but as those most familiar with myths and other cherished possessions. With the spread of new ideas, the young people no longer respect the lore of their elders, and consequently do not heed their admonitions and advice. Theoretically, such self-reliance would seem desirable, but in practice it has led to unfortunate results. A young man, considering himself superior to the older people, glories in acting on his own initiative, but too often he lacks the requisite strength of character to guide his own life. If he wishes to drink, he does so; if he desires to marry, he chooses his mate without considering the transmission of ancestral rights which stabilized unions in former times; if he tires of his wife, he deserts her for another; if he cheats or steals, he is no longer restrained by relatives who fear disgrace. The elders, incapable of stemming the tide, watch sadly and ask seriously whether the coming of the white man has brought compensation for the loss it has caused. It is deplorable that the emancipation of the younger men and women has taken place before the development of the sense of individual responsibility and conscience which public opinion formerly rendered less necessary. Christianity provides a moral code for those who are fully converted, but for the many in the transition stage, the break-down of the old system of family influence has been tragic.

Profound religious beliefs and lack of individual initiative are shared by all Bella Coola with the exception, perhaps, of a few of the younger people who, having been educated at white man's schools, have adopted the new outlook unconditionally. In most characteristics they display as wide variability as any other people. In truthfulness, for example, they range from one extreme to the other. As the writer became familiar with the older men, he found it possible to recognize without difficulty the strength of some and the weakness of others. There are liars, but they can be easily detected owing to their lack of finesse. It is a pleasure to record the reliability of the author's friends and informants. Their veracity was checked repeat-

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group. The moral code is not concerned with animals. The life of the Bella Coola would be unbearable to most white people, yet they find it far from unpleasant. They sigh at present conditions, but there is much to amuse them notwithstanding. If several people are talking together, one is sure to hear bursts of laughter every few minutes. It takes little to interest them; a story they have heard a hundred times, the troubles of a neighbour with his wife, the eccentricity of a white man, the stupidity of the investigator, any of these is enough to cause a hearty laugh. When collecting information, it was constantly necessary to joke with them; the most feeble witticism was enough, but they lost interest in the work unless kept smiling. Their sense of humour is not refined; jests about sexual matters are common and are enjoyed alike by men, women, and children. It is not that their tastes are perverted, but rather that they have no reticence in discussing this topic, so they find it easy to see the ludicrous aspects of a subject which is ever near the surface in their minds. They have no hesitation in poking fun at their friends; a successful practical joke, such as hiding the writer's tobacco, is enough to fill them with amusement. If the victim shows temporary resentment, the glee of his friends is complete, and shrieks of laughter usually terminate the trick.

Unless the white man who comes to live among the Bella Coola is unusually broad-minded, he is at first repelled by the dirt and untidiness prevailing everywhere; even the people themselves seem unnatural. He finds it difficult to realize the sincerity of their religious beliefs, and the manner in which these influence their daily lives is hard to grasp. The potlatch system appears so grotesque that it seems to reflect a psychology diametrically opposed to his own. The force of public opinion on personal conduct is almost incomprehensible. Gradually, however, he begins to understand the reasons underlying Bella Coola life. The potlatch becomes intelligible when regarded as a means of achieving fame; constant attention to supernatural beings is natural considering the firm conviction

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105 of their omnipresence; the guiding force of public opinion is
182 seen as a check on individual licence, fostered or inculcated by
[626] the ties which hold together ancestral families and make it impossible for a man to lead an isolated life where others will not be affected by his actions. If the white man is willing to receive new ideas, he will learn much from the comments of the Bella Coola on his own customs. Many have been to
[556] Victoria or Vancouver, and they feel that the contrasts of wealth observable in such big cities are atrocious; they ask
[602] how this is compatible with Christianity. They feel that it is unnatural for a man not to receive support from his cousins of
[556] all degrees; that the hoarding of wealth for the mere gratification of personal desires is selfish; that the selling of land is extraordinary; and that failure to ascribe every incident to supernatural causes is sacrilegious. These differences of viewpoint on so many matters explain the first impression of strangeness. A careful investigator comes to realize that he is among a people who fundamentally differ but slightly from his compatriots, though outwardly they have little in common. With respect to love, ambition, parental affection, sense of honour, pride, intelligence, even humour and vanity, the Bella Coola are essentially similar to ourselves. Unfortunately, these characteristics are expressed in ways unintelligible and often repellant to the casual traveller. If he will only look beneath the surface, he will find a people who are neither saints nor sinners, but essentially human, with the faults and follies as well as the elements of strength and wisdom which comprise, as Kipling puts it, "Men in a world of men."

177 The coming of the white civilization has been cataclysmic
[161] to the Bella Coola. Within two generations they have been
[36] reduced to a mere handful; instead of living in scattered villages, roaming the mountains for game and fishing at will, they now dwell in a single settlement and the taking of animals and fish is subject to law; the introduction of metal tools and mechanical appliances has revolutionized their mode of life; new foods, new clothing, new furniture has altered their living conditions; fermented drink has presented a factor unknown

to their forefathers. Profound as these material changes have been, those of a psychological nature have been even more important. New worlds have been thrown open to them, stimulating ideas have been brought to their attention, and they have realized for the first time that the world is infinitely larger than they had imagined. Hand in hand with this extension of knowledge has gone disbelief in their own ancient lore. The white man, whose supremacy and mechanical skill they admit, positively denies the actuality of their mythology, and laughs at the dramatic performances which were once to fill the winter with engrossing interest. Such rites can flourish only in an attitude of profound belief: this has been so shaken that the dances continue listlessly, a mere shadow of a once living art. The young people were the first to embrace a scepticism that has rapidly grown into disbelief in the faith of their ancestors, and a half-concealed scorn for their elders, the upholders of the old customs. Worst of all, prohibition of the potlatch has made it impossible for a man to reach a position of social eminence. Moreover, since the holding of any type of ceremonial requires a distribution of gifts, formal gatherings of all kinds have become virtually impossible; even marriages have no longer the social support that formerly made them so lasting.

These cumulative blows would be enough to shake any civilization, and that of the Bella Coola has been entirely unable to adjust itself to the new conditions. The young people, having lost respect for their elders, are deprived of the advice and support essential to the continuity of culture. They ape the white man's dress, they want his mechanical devices, but have failed to assimilate them. For example, a gramophone in a Bella Coola house is an anachronism, while several similar articles spoil the old pictures but do not provide a new one. Looking to copy the new ways thrown open to them, they have achieved the outward show but not the coherence, and in so doing have destroyed their own culture. In the old days they were ambitious to hold potlatches and willing to work steadily towards that goal; now, new desires have not kept pace with

their earning ability and a man can satisfy his wants by working for a few months each summer. The decline of ceremonials has left a blank in their lives, too easily filled, alas, with drinking, idleness, and vice. It is inevitable that the old rites and old traditions should pass, but the prohibition of them before new ones had taken their place, has been disastrous. The Baffin Lands have lost their pride, a calamity as fatal to a people as it is an individual.

They have shown undoubted ability in developing such of their new talents as fit the needs and requirements of the white man. Taken carpenters for generations, they have readily learnt the use of new tools and now build houses and boats of considerable constructional skill. They have proved themselves valuable employees of the companies which rely to a large extent upon Indian labour. Under instruction from a white teacher, a number of the younger men have formed a band which gives creditable performances with wind and percussion instruments. One can only deplore the fact that the skill of the Baffin Lands in carving, painting, acting, singing, composing, and story-telling could not have been guided into channels where it could have developed and added lustre to the new world to which they find themselves.

The white man's civilization presses forward as an overwhelming flood, blotting out the cultures of lower peoples in all parts of the world. This is inevitable, probably it is well that it should be so, but it often little consolation to a tribe like the Baffin Lands. Their life has been destroyed, and, unknowingly, half-heartedly, half-shamefully, the survivors watch the downfall of all that their ancestors cherished. Too often the white man fails to understand this, too often he fails to realize that primitive, as he sees it, is simply one valuable element of civilization other than his own instead of seeking the good in them and preserving it for the benefit of himself and the native alike. The Baffin Lands culture is dying, and with it will pass forever something created by a Canadian people, one great perhaps, but infinitely emergent with their personality.

[illegible] FIGURES

The only form of exercise which it was practical to investigate in any detail was the construction of string figures. These seem to have no ceremonial or religious significance, they are made for recreation only, and it was found easy to learn a number while passing the time for other kinds of research. In fact, interest in them was one of the ways in which the writer became friends with a number of Boas Cooks. So it is to be expected, some individuals are more proficient in constructing complicated string figures than others, the old women being particularly adept. Having the long ribbon which goes to all the dances is a common right to see an old crone watching a group of young girls the figure which she herself learnt when young. Some men remember a number from their childhood, but the making of designs with string is regarded as more fitting for girls and women. Songs accompany many of the figures, and the singing of these is considered an essential part of the construction. It was stated that many more figures were known long ago, in fact, several of those here recorded were only obtained after repeated efforts on the part of an old woman to remember those which she had been shown when a child. No attempt has been made to learn all the Boas Cooks figures, a larger number could doubtless have been collected, but those here described are the ones most commonly made.

The nomenclature used is that described by Miss Haddon[1] in itself following the method used by Rivers and Haddon. It will be observed that the reader is familiar with this including the meaning of the terms, "Opening A," "Position 1," and "Variation." A string about two feet long will be found most convenient for making the Boas Cooks figures.

1. A SIMPLE LOOP

Double the loop, the opposite side takes the place of the wrist one, but these will be referred to as a single string or loop. The figure can be made equally well with a string one half the usual length.

Place string as a simple loop over left thumb and index finger and the right hand.

With right index finger hook down the string passing directly across left thumb and index finger and draw out to right, allowing right hand loop to slip over the hooked down string.

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1. Haddon, Cat's Cradle from Many Lands (London, 1911).